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ABSTRACT

Although central office supervisors are emerging as critical linchpins of school improvement efforts, research is quite limited in this area. This study differs from previous efforts by focusing on the administrator's real world and identifying the subjective role conceptions and statements shared by four outstanding central office supervisors. It provides data based on shared meanings (held in common despite variances in social context) as determined by qualitative analysis of open-ended, in-depth interviews. The study ignores a priori constructs held by the researcher or authorities in the field. Findings suggest that effective supervisors are highly flexible and able to cope successfully with the fragmentation, ambiguity, and invisibility characterizing their role. These role aspects, far from being problematic, ensure access to various levels of information and enhance the supervisor's ability to respond well to individual differences, the needs of a diversified staff, and changes in leadership and programs. The capacity to respond appropriately characterizes principals possessing more complex cognitive structures. Preparation programs should provide specific training in solving complex problems and in metacognition. Included are 2 tables and 119 references. (MLH)

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Flexibility and Central Office Supervisors: The Instrumental Function of Fragmentation, Invisibility, and Ambiguity

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Qualitative data derived from an inductive, descriptive study of four outstanding central office instructional supervisors suggest that effective occupants of the role are highly flexible in that they not only cope effectively with but perhaps rely on the fragmentation, ambiguity, and invisibility that characterize their role. These aspects of the role have traditionally been viewed as problematic. Data from the study and related research suggest that these aspects are instrumental in that they ensure access to various levels of information and constituencies within the organization and enhance the supervisors' ability to respond effectively to varied individual differences, the needs of a diversified staff, and to changes in leadership and in programs. Indeed, it is the "ability to call appropriate behavior into action in a given circumstance that characterizes effective leaders" (Murphy, Hallinger, & Mitman, 1983, p. 300). The capacity to so respond has been found to be characteristic of principals with more complex cognitive structures (Silver, 1975). Since Harvey (1964) has provided evidence that conceptual ability is a learned characteristic, preparation programs could enhance the conceptual complexity and the flexibility of future central office instructional supervisors by specific training in solving complex problems and in metacognition.

BACKGROUND

Our schools are currently inundated with demands for reform and improvement. Demands of accountability require schools to seek to implement practices and programs and provide personnel that have demonstrated effectiveness. Central office supervisors seem to play an important part in such improvement efforts. Cox (1983) states that:

> From the study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement we have learned that . . . central office personnel--curriculum coordinators, program directors, and specialists--have emerged as significant actors in the process of change. In fact, central office staff may well be the linchpins of school improvement efforts {italics added}, linking together the external assisters and the building level administrators and teachers. They appear to be the most appropriate local sources of assistance in actually using new practices. (p. 10)

If central office supervisors are indeed critical linchpins of school improvement (Fullan, 1982), it is critical, in turn, that we have access to research on effective central office instructional supervisors. Indeed, Fullan (1982) cites a number of studies which underscore the "critical" (p. 241) and "crucial" (p. 245) role in utilization of knowledge (KU) played by district staff. Noting the need for research on central office/district staff, Fullan (1982) states, "There is such limited research on the role of district staff

that almost anything would make a contribution. Conceptual and empirical work is needed on what characterizes these different roles" (p. 250). Thus, the present study was needed because there was no previous research on effective central office instructional supervisors.

In fact, little research on central office instructional supervisors based solely on the supervisors' perspective exists. Most studies of instructional supervisors are surveys of perceptions of the supervisory role held by supervisors, administrators, and/or teachers (Beach, 1976; Boucree, 1979; Brande, 1981; Cantrell, 1979; Cardenos, 1966; Carlton, 1970; Carmon, 1970; Casey, 1982; Colbert, 1966; Danley & Burch, 1978b; Hopkins, 1982; Kordomenos, 1981; Kyle, 1984; Lott, 1963; Lovell & Phelps, 1976; Marchak, 1969; Miller, 1959; Norman, 1978; Roberson, 1980; Smith, 1975; Spears, 1980; and Young & Heichberger). Such studies seek to identify what agreement exists among public school professional personnel regarding preferred activities of supervisors. Because central office supervisors serve in a mid-level position that seeks to link the needs of the school system as an organization and the needs of individual teachers and building principals (Diamond, 1979), central office supervisors strive to respond to the expectations of all levels of a school system's professional staff.

Many studies include as supervisors all professional personnel who serve in any supervisory capacity, such as principals and subject area specialists whether at the

central office or at the building level. Of those studies which report the supervisors' actual and preferred activities as perceived by only supervisors (Afifi, 1980; Anderson, 1979; Danley & Burch, 1978a; Davis, 1979; DeFeo, 1983; Douglass, 1979; Goslin, 1980; Holder, 1977; Lentini, 1974; Esposito & Burback, 1973; Meffort, 1979; Rentz, 1969; Ross, 1968; Srisa, 1967; Thomas, 1981; Walker & Hamm, 1981; and Wichit, 1967), it is difficult to extract the responses of only central office instructional supervisors.

Three descriptive survey studies have focussed on the central office instructional supervisor (Breniman, 1963; Burch & Danley, 1980; and Loftus, 1980). Another descriptive study of central office supervisors conducted by the A.S.C.D. Committee on Research on Central Office Supervision and reported by Blumberg (1984) was based on the responses of 75 central office supervisors, most of whom responded to an article (Costa & Guditus, 1984) soliciting interest on the issue of central office supervisors. Results of the study included the following: (a) The nature of job titles and role expectations of central office supervisors are idiosyncratic; (b) incumbents feel the efficacy of their role is continually questioned; (c) the number of supervisors in a district is related to both the number of pupils and schools; and (d) reduction of other central office positions has resulted in their having to assume additional responsibilities.

Harris and Hargraves (1972) note that "most empirical studies involving the effectiveness of supervision have been from the standpoint of evaluating the results of in-service education programs planned and conducted by supervisors" (p. 75). However, more recently, four studies sought to determine supervisory effectiveness by conducting correlational studies. Capper (1981) found a high degree of agreement between supervisory procedures and teacher morale. Cook (1983) reports an inverse relationship between supervisory Consideration and teacher burnout. Fraser (1980) suggests that the two most important of 16 supervisory practices identified in his study as indices of teacher satisfaction, (a) a real concern for the teacher as a person and (b) a collegial relationship, indicate that the nature of the relationship between supervisors and teachers may be more important than specific techniques. A reduction in role conflict among supervisors occurs by developing a participatory climate in the schools, Mayo (1983) reports from her study.

None of the studies of supervisors' perceptions gathered the data from a purely inductive approach which seeks to avoid imposing preconceived ideas concerning what is important about a supervisor's work, nor have there been any studies of supervisors' perceptions of their role which did so with a sample that was anything other than a convenience sample or simply that percentage of a convenience sample who responded to the questionnaire. No studies were identified

which focussed on instructional supervisors who are considered exemplary or effective according to some specific criteria.

Costa and Guditus (1984) observed that there is ". . . no system in effect for collecting data about effectiveness and influence for supervisors" (p. 84). The Committee on Research on Central Office Supervision (1984) similarly concluded:

> It is doubted that any study of effective central office supervision could be made that would yield reliable and valid results . . . {because} the role expectations of the positions . . . {are} simply idiosyncratic to each situation. Any broad-based study of the effectiveness of central office supervision has to be doomed to failure for the simple reason that the problem as stated is probably unresearchable. (pp. 2-3)

If a broad-based, quantitative study of effective central office supervision is considered "unresearchable," research utilizing inductive, qualitative methodology should provide alternative insights into aspects of the role of effective central office supervisors.

Few studies on instructional supervision have utilized qualitative methodology. Two studies of central office instructional supervisors (Sullivan, 1980; Donmoyer & Neff, 1983) sought to determine whether Mintzberg's (1973) theory could account for the work behavior of central office instructional supervisors. Neither study suggests that the participants' behavior was characterized as effective or that

the supervisors involved were chosen because of their effectiveness in their role. Convenience seems to have been the primary criterion in selection. Studies based on Mintzberg's theory focus on work behavior and utilize his typologies for categorizing that work behavior; this results in delimiting the data to be collected and the appropriate classification and interpretation of that data. An inductive study not based on researcher-determined a priori constructs was needed to determine aspects of the role of central office instructional supervisors that might provide insights which deductive and a priori typological studies might have overlooked.

Sergiovanni (1983) stated that "The problems of supervision . . . need to be addressed in a fashion that emphasizes interpretation and meaning" (p. 349). Pajak's (in progress) study and the present study respond to the need for studies which emphasize interpretation and meaning. Pajak has identified five conceptual themes which facilitate understanding and which provide interpretive insights into the role of central office instructional supervisors. His study involved 10 central office instructional supervisors from two states who were selected for participation because of their local reputation and their convenience.

THE STUDY

The present study presents insights into the role of central office instructional supervisor based on data gathered from four outstanding instructional supervisors in

one state. The supervisors involved in the present study may be considered as effective, based on their state-wide selection by other supervisors, administrators, and teachers as outstanding. They provide a population of effective supervisors based on a quasi-formal criterion.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover and describe the meanings that characterize the perceptions that four outstanding central office instructional supervisors associate with their role. The study was exploratory to generate issues and explanatory hypotheses presented as discussional theory derived from the integrating concepts that emerged from the data. The study utilized qualitative/naturalistic methodological perspectives (Goetz, & LeCompte, 1984) and was based on symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1974; Meltzer, 1972) and role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) as theoretical perspectives.

Method

The present study differs from earlier studies in that it seeks to describe the real world of supervisors by identifying the subjective role conceptions and role statements (Biddle & Thomas, 1966) shared by four outstanding central office instructional supervisors. It provides data based on the shared meanings that those outstanding supervisors hold in common, despite the variances in their social context, as determined by qualitative analysis of open-ended, in-depth interviews. The study is not based on a

priori constructs held by the researcher or by authorities in the field. The participants themselves provided the data upon which hypotheses might be based. The data are verbal rather than numerical. It, therefore, offers a unique perspective both in regard to methodology, to participants, and to data presentation. Qualitative methodology was used to collect, analyze, and present the data because it permits the researcher to investigate an area without determining those dimensions that are significant enough to warrant investigation prior to collecting the data. Rather, significant dimensions emerge from the research participants or site. A conceptually ordered presentation of findings gathered in such research is said to be grounded in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This methodology allows investigation of an area when the researcher is, in the absence of prior research in that specific area, seeking to identify those dimensions that describe the area and provide grounded theory as a guide to further research.

Participants

A sample of four outstanding central office supervisors was chosen from a population of 13 currently practicing central office supervisors in Georgia who were past winners of one or both of two state-wide awards in instructional supervision. Recipients of the awards, Outstanding Instructional Supervisor of the Year or Award for Distinguished Service in Supervision, were chosen after being nominated by other supervisors, administrators, and/or

teachers in one of ten congressional districts in the state. Each of the 10 districts submitted a nominee for each award. The state-wide winner of each award was chosen by members of the two sponsoring professional organizations, Georgia Association for Curriculum and Instructional Supervision (GACIS) and Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL). One participant was a curriculum director with K12 responsibilities; one participant was an elementary curriculum director; one participant was director of instruction with K-12 responsibilities; and one participant was director of elementary education. The four participants were responsible for supervising 115 to 345 teachers. The largest system represented had 660 teachers. In the smallest system represented, the supervisor is one of two central office personnel whose primary concern is the instructional program. In the largest system represented, the supervisor is one of four whose primary responsibility is the instructional program.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected from open-ended, in-depth, unstructured interviews in which the four supervisors who participated responded to a deliberately ambiguous question which sought to avoid restricting aspects to be discussed: "Assuming I know nothing about what it means to be a central office instructional supervisor, what would you have to tell me to let me know what it means to you?" During the initial interview, the supervisors were asked no specific

substantive question; the researcher asked only probing and clarification questions in response to the supervisors' comments. The interviews were taped and transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparison method. Several iterations of substantive codings led to analytic sensitizing constructs which were then used to theoretically code the data at higher levels of abstraction. The emerging integrating constructs led to a preliminary theoretical interpretation of the data. This preliminary theoretical analysis and the specific quotive data from each participant for each category in that analysis were submitted to the participants so they could identify omissions and/or misinterpretations to be discussed during a follow-up interview. During the second interview with the participants to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data by conducting a member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the analysis was discussed; these discussions were also taped and transcribed as data which was then analyzed. Also, during the second interview, the participants responded to a preliminary graphic theoretical framework that integrated the concepts that emerged from the data analysis. Subsequent to the second interview the theoretical codes were further reduced and clarified. Likewise, the graphic theoretical framework was refined.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The response of the four outstanding central office instructional supervisors who participated in this study were

presented in terms of two broad categories: credibility and flexibility. Credibility refers to the earned professional respect and trust accorded or attributed to the supervisor by teachers and administrators because of the supervisor's demonstrated professional skills, experience, and leadership in instructional matters. Flexibility refers to the capacity of the supervisors to adapt to and to respond purposefully, appropriately, and effectively to the fragmented, paradoxical, and ambiguous nature of their role. Credibility and flexibility seem to be those attributes of outstanding central office instructional supervisors that enable them to influence the instructional and curricular program and teachers and administrators in a school system. These two broad themes seem to be the way the participants account for their influence as outstanding central office instructional supervisors. The theme of flexibility is further divided into three subcategories which include: fragmented focus, paradoxical visibility, and authority ambiguity. Sample quotive data in the main category of flexibility are presented below to delineate specifics of that theme. Table 1 provides an overview of aspects of each of these subcategories.

Flexibility

Fragmented Focus

The focus of outstanding central office instructional supervisors' time and energy is fragmented by the many diverse activities and programmatic responsibilities of the

Table 1

Fragmented Focus		Flexibility Paradoxical Visibility		Authority Ambiguity	
Activities	Time Demands	Accessibility	Invisibility	Function	Relationships
Accreditation Adult Ed. Budgeting Certification Direct Teacher Assistance Curriculum Development Early Childhood Education Evaluation Federal Programs Library/Media Personnel Professional Library Public Relations Staff Development Teacher Center Testing Textbook Adoption	Paperwork Meetings Time Management	To Supervisor -Teacher -Parents To Information To Resources	Giving Credit Away Dealing with Criticism Sources of Satisfaction	Purpose & Goals Continuity Change	Focus of Interaction -Teachers -Involve in Planning -Pressures -Boundaries of Supervisor's Authority -Insecure Teachers -Motivation -Grade Level Responses -Principals -Collaborative -Credibility -Frustrations -Superintendents -New (change) -Support -State Dept. of Education Nature of Interaction -Collaborative/Team -Directive

role. Participants in this study reported responsibility for coordination of as many as 17 different programs and activities. Their time and energy are reported as further fragmented by the excessive paperwork allied with these programs and activities. Additionally, the participants in this study report the extensive demands on their time and energy required by attending many meetings relative to these responsibilities. Attention to these demands requires considerable overtime after hours and on weekends and diminishes the time available for classroom visitation and observation, a source of frustration to the supervisors. As a result, the supervisors report an awareness of a need to manage their time better than they do.

Variety of Activities

Outstanding central office instructional supervisors must divide their time and energy among a multitude of areas of instructional and curricular concerns. Many of these activities and responsibilities occur simultaneously and lack points of discrete closure.

Comments of participants identify the multiple activities for which they are responsible as fragmenting their time and energy:

> Doing the coordinating . . . pulling together all those little bits and pieces . . . takes a lot of brain work. It is a coordination, a written effort to get things done. (3A)

> That's one of the things that I think is to my disadvantage in a small system--is that we have to have a lot of hats. I thought that was a silly little expression when I first got started. We have a lot of different roles that we play. (1A20)

> There is a need for instructional people; there's just all these things--I mean, who's doing all these things? (4B33)

Table 2 includes all those identified program responsibilities within the local school systems served by the four outstanding central office supervisors involved in this study. Although not all of the supervisors reported being involved in all activities, the length of the list indicates that they must divide their time and energy among many programmatic areas. The number after each category indicates how many of the participants reported either being currently responsible for the activity or having been previously involved in it in more than an advisory manner.

As Table 2 indicates, of 17 identified activities most (3) of the central office supervisors reported being significantly involved in at least 13 (76%). All supervisors reported being significantly involved in, if not solely responsible for 10 (59%) of the indicated activities.

Time Demands

Time demanded by excessive paperwork in preparing reports related to the supervisors' many responsibilities was reported as a hindrance to being able to do other kinds of things such as classroom visitations and being in the schools:

> I would say 65% of my time is spent on paperwork, which is something that bothers me, but it has to be done. The crisis type of things maybe 10%; and then the balance (25%) would be working with groups. (3A5,6)

> There is a great deal of paperwork. Yes, there would be a great deal of paperwork. (4A16)

Attending meetings was reported as demanding a great deal of time:

Table 2

Number of Supervisors Reporting Involvement in Each Activity

Activity	No. of Supervisors
Accreditation	4
Budgeting	4
Curriculum Development	4
Early Childhood Education	4
Evaluation	4
Personnel	4
Federal Programs	4
Staff Development	4
Testing	4
Textbook Adoption	4
Certification	3
Professional Library	3
Public Relations	3
Direct Teacher Assistance	2
Library/Media	2
Adult Education	1
Teacher Center	1

> But many times I think, well they could have just sent us a memo on this. So there are a lot of things, I guess, in education that are that way--that are wasted. But at the same time I am glad to do that. I don't mind doing that. (1A36)

The huge demands on their time led two central office supervisors to remark on their need to manage their time more wisely and to plan more carefully.

> I think that the weakness, I would have to say that I do not read as much professionally as I want to. There again, may be it's not using my time as wisely. I feel that is a real deficit. I try to keep up, but that is a weakness that I am not as informed as I want to be in all aspects of it. And you have to be informed, you really do. So that's a weakness. I need to plan better in order to keep up professionally better than I'm doing. (4A24)

> That's one of the things that I don't do as well as I need to--is plan. Because of the day's activities. (1A34)

The multiple demands on their time seem to make the supervisors feel pushed and pulled.

> That's another thing, sometimes I think supervision can be frustrating because of the lack of time. And all the problems, as far as all the reports and those kinds of problems that come. And you really have a multiple of things pulling at you if you do them all. And, in a small system, it's a little help because you do have principals who will take some of those responsibilities--as far as responsibility for their own school. That makes some difference. But you waste a mighty lot of time in supervision because of the having to do reports and doing things for the system that are time-consuming. But that's part of the job, too. (1A19)

> We are always starting something and then changing the things that we started we have kept. We have added and keep adding things, and sometimes it is hard to do all of the things that we are doing and then add new things too. (3A5)

Paradoxical Visibility

Outstanding central office instructional supervisors are caught in something of a dilemma. To coordinate the instruc-

tional program effectively and to assist teachers in improving instruction, central office instructional supervisors must demonstrate flexibility in being able to be accessible to teachers, to administrators, to parents in the community, to resources, and to information. At the same time, however, supervisors enact a role that is characterized by invisibility in that they: (1) receive little credit, indeed, must pass it on to others; (2) must be willing to accept criticism; (3) experience few objective rewards; and (4) must find their rewards in primarily subjective, indirect ways.

Accessibility

"So I'm kind of a clearing house" (4A19). This remark by one of the participants alludes to the dual need of outstanding central office instructional supervisors to be accessible to her many constituencies, to information, and to resources. Similar remarks by other participants echo this characteristic on their role:

> There is a great deal of paperwork. Yes, there would be a great deal of paperwork, and then there has to be a certain amount of being available to do those quick things and the telephone will ring and say "By the way, I was supposed to speak to thus and so, can you pick up and go" kind of situation. You don't sit around and wait on that. (4A16)

> Even though you have to be on hand to put out fires, you have to get all of these things done that need to be done. (3A4)

The participants indicated that they were aware teachers should have access to the supervisors:

> I think the teachers see me as very accessible, but then I come back here with just a lot of things to do. So, I feel they feel comfortable in asking me to do things. I always write down their requests and try to follow through. (3A32)

Likewise, parents must have access to the supervisors who provide information and answers to questions:

> But parents want to be able to get to somebody who can give them the answers. Now they will often times start with the superintendent, but goodness knows, the superintendent can't know everything. He has to have staff people who are _____. And if it's instructional, it comes here. And they want to know an answer and you have got to be able to listen to the parents, and particularly if they are irate and then come back and that may involve meetings with parents or the teachers, or whatever. I wouldn't want to imply that is a major part of the time consumption, but it is a part that must be attended to. It may not be ignored at all, and if I come in having been in a school then answer those phone calls. They must be answered even if it's quite late. And so that is something that has to be done. That public relations aspect must be there, and I consider that an extremely important part of public relations--being accessible and answering those phone calls. (4A16,17)

Supervisors are resourceful in that they can, through access to information, provide answers to questions that teachers ask and must know how to access that information:

> I don't pretend to know the answers to all the questions that teachers ask me about the different disciplines. I don't even feel I have to know that, but I think I jolly well better know where to get those answers. (4A3)

One supervisor demonstrated resourcefulness in seeking avenues to gaining access to teachers:

> Another thing that I was told when I was going through training was that I can't do be a "tote machine." I wasn't supposed to take books around. I wasn't supposed to go because that's not my job. I should let somebody else do it. I've laughed as I've carried books in the classroom. Because, in a small system, again, I can

> easily pick up five books and take them over in two or three minutes. The classrooms are only two or three minutes away. That gives me a great entree into the class. And I've helped that teacher--so we can sit down and say how are you going to use it? I never have minded doing some of the things some of the other curriculum directors may not do. Because I've helped teachers do a lot of things. (1A27)

Invisibility

"We are not a visible group, a lot of times" (1A79).

Paradoxically, despite the need for central office supervisors to maintain frequent and easy access to their several levels of constituencies and ensure that those constituencies have easy access to them in return, outstanding central office instructional supervisors are aware that their role is not a highly visible one. In this regard, participants reported efforts to ensure that others, rather than themselves, receive credit for improvements. Also, participants in this study reported having to be willing to accept criticism. This presents a situation in which few opportunities exist for central office instructional supervisors to receive the usual kinds of rewards they received as a teacher from interacting with students; supervisors report finding most of their rewards in indirect and subjective ways.

All participants indicated awareness of the invisible nature of their role:

> I think . . . there is a need for more supervision in our schools in terms of being visible. (2A31)

The demands of paperwork and of attention to so many varied activities can contribute to a central office super-

visor's invisibility, unless a concerted effort is made to get into the schools and thus become visible to teachers and principals.

> I think supervision probably looks easier to the outsider than it really is if you are effective. I think a supervisor can get away without doing a lot. He can just bury yourself in the paperwork. I think you could do that very easily and that would be unrewarding. It would be to me. Because you gotta get out. And that's what I try to do. I believe in being out in the field as much as I can because you need the visibility. (1A79)

> One of the dangers that I think curriculum directors do have is the problem of being invisible because you do get wrapped up in doing all these things here and you don't get out in the school even though you like to be visible and you want to be visible. Sometimes just the sheer load will make it such that you will be buried and will not make a point to get out. And I find my system time will not be out in the schools for several days at a time. I thought, this is terrible and I'm not seeing anybody and I'm not getting some things done that I want to check on. (2B24)

Giving credit away. Outstanding central office instructional supervisors must be content to receive satisfaction indirectly from student achievement and must ensure that credit for educational improvement be given away in an effort to make others look good. Credit for improvements refers to the reward system that characterizes school performance by students, teachers, and principals and which distinguishes education as an enterprise from business enterprises whose reward system often involves monetary increases. That is, credit is recognition to those who are viewed as being responsible for some achievement. Central office instructional supervisors say that they must work behind the scenes and pass credit for improvements on to teachers, principals, and/or superintendents:

> Much of the time curriculum directors are working behind the scenes. And that's the gospel truth. Somebody has to do it. A person in supervision has to be a person who doesn't mind not getting credit for things that are done. And for some reason that has just not been a hang-up of mine--whether or not I was awarded the credit for whatever took place. (1A9)

> In The Nation of Risk they never mention a supervisor. They mention a superintendent, the principals, the teachers, and nothing was said about supervisors and I think it is like a state employee. It is just getting left out. It is just frightening, and I think it is because supervisors have been taught to stay in the background. In other words, you do a good job and you make that building level principal look good or those teachers look good--and have played down the skills we have and built up other people. I think that this is probably part of the problem. To make the general public feel like we don't exist. We are not visible so we don't exist. It really concerns me. Even if they said something negative about us, at least they would know we existed, rather than not saying anything at all. (3A39)

> You cannot push. I have always felt that I need to see somebody else gets the credit, and the superintendent, if at all possible, but anything good that happens. (2B31)

> We are not a visible group a lot of times. If I ever write a letter in relation to public relations, I always put the superintendent's name on it. He ought to be _____ but I'll do the writing. I don't have many problems with that. I think it needs to come from him. Sometimes I will just by accident put my name on something and I will think, usually I wouldn't do that. I will think, well, there's no need to change it, just leave it that way. (1A80)

Dealing with criticism. Not only must credit be given away, but also the participants acknowledged the necessity of central office instructional supervisors' having the capacity to accept blame and handle criticism:

> You cannot push, and I have always felt, that I need to see that somebody else gets the credit and the superintendent if at all possible, but anything good that happens, but you have to be willing to accept the blame for a lot of the bad that you really didn't have anything to do with. And I guess that's where you cease

> to be as sensitive because you have to build up that armour because the superintendent can't live with the blame, generally speaking. And I don't know whether that's been a personality thing for my superintendents or whether that's true for men or whether that's--or just what it might be. But it has become apparent to me that in my position this is the way it has to be. And it doesn't really bother because inside I know. (2B31)

Sources of satisfaction. In the absence of being able to interact directly with students, in doing thankless jobs, in passing credit to others, in being largely invisible, and in being able to absorb criticism, how then do outstanding central office instructional supervisors find satisfaction in their jobs? What rewards are there in such a seemingly self-effacing position? Most of the supervisors who participated in this study reported finding rewards in increased scores on students'andardized test scores. Supervisors view the increases as outcomes of their efforts as they work with teachers and administrators in coordinating improvements in the instructional program. Yet supervisors seem to be aware that tracing a clear causal pattern between their efforts in their mid-management position and final outcomes of students would be impossible because of the incredible number of intervening variables. Then too, even if that were possible, given the invisible nature of the role and the attendant need to give away credit, supervisors would hardly be in a position to be awarded that credit.

One supervisor indicated that the position presented "an opportunity to serve; and somehow I feel I have to serve and have to have that which is born in me" (2A). Such a comment

may well reflect an altruistic attitude toward the role that would be instrumental in coping with some of the frustrating characteristics of the role.

Three participants in the study reported that an "improvement on test scores" (3A3) and "being able to see the increase in scores on the tests~ (2A59) as indicators of student progress were sources of satisfaction and reward to them in their role as central office instructional supervisors. Test scores were seen as "direct satisfaction, indirect impact" (4A8) to another participant.

It would not only be gratifying to be seen as a causal agent for increased test scores, it would also be a way of proving objectively, in this age of accountability demands, the value of the position. However, the supervisors in this study identified a variety of subjective ways in which they find a sense of efficacy, of finding satisfaction from and rewards in their role as central office instructional supervisors. Thus, most sources of satisfaction and reward in the role of central office instructional supervisors were primarily subjective. They include:

1. Excitement:

> No two days are ever the same. It's challenging because there is so much to be done and you don't know how you are going to deal with it, but it's exciting, it's stimulating, challenging, very interesting. I think it is rewarding in a lot of ways. (2A77)

2. Coordinating:

> It is really neat being able to work in all of the different little things and the different little parts of the comprehensive staff development program. (3A)

3. Professional recognition:

I think I was so, honest, surprised in a lot of ways to get the award that we talked about, and that was a great reward to me--that my co-workers could feel that way about me. (2A69)

4. Being in charge:

But then I'll be honest, the ego trip is what is good, being director of all, but I feel like definitely in working with the teachers, it is more like supervising. (3A)

5. Seeing teachers feel better:

I think the teachers are beginning to feel better bout themselves and that has been very helpful. (3A19)

6. Being able to meet teacher's needs:

It was incredible at the things that they wanted. It took me like months to gather all of this stuff, but I have been able to send those things to teachers and do those things that needed to be done. That was really neat. That was like a global approach to hit all teachers, but I still don't really have time to visit. (3A)

7. Personal relationships:

And it's been a great pleasure for to be in the position that I could get to know a lot of people. That's the thing that has been very personally rewarding--to know the people that I have worked with in supervision. They have really inspired me to do better. (1A70)

I guess in terms of reward, personal relationships and seeing schools grow and resources increase in the libraries and in the teachers' classrooms. (3A4)

8. Teacher's attitude:

Teachers seem very appreciative. (3A3)

I don't know, it is just the greetings that I get. I feel like a team member when I go into the schools with the teachers. (3A26)

They will also mention things like, "Oh, I really liked the kit that you got for my class," or they will

call and will want to know more about something that I sent them and it lets me know that they are using the things that I have gathered for them, and to me it is rewarding to see things actually being used and questions being asked. It may be in a round about way where, for instance, with the games and things that the teachers call in wanting workshops set up. I told them that we would be available at a much earlier time, but now is the time to make those changes. I am getting requests for things that get into that time line that we set for getting things done. And just knowing that they are tuned in and that they are doing what I have asked them to do is so rewarding. Because they are getting paid to teach and if they wanted to say that this is not necessarily their job then they could. Especially, if I keep calling on them constantly, but it is like that. (3A24)

9. Implementation of improvements:

And, then you have the personal contact with the pupil-teacher relationships that exist. I don't have that now, but compensating for that is if we look at programs, which I would be about. In looking at programs, then when I can go into a school and teachers can say to me this really works well with our children. Now, that is an indirect compensation that I get. I didn't do it directly, but indirectly it happened because of me. (4A7)

Going back to classrooms and findings things implemented, you know, that teachers and I have talked about and changes being made and being helped. (3A3)

10. Support for ideas:

When you can start getting educated people to support something that you have been preaching, and believe me, I have been doing this for a long time. I think it is going to carry over, and you see that is carrying over to my principals. In this particular school, this principal was on my side anyway. (2A62)

11. Being sought out:

The fact that building principals call and say we really need some assistance in this. And this is our project. We would like for you to be our chief resource to help us plan. And that is an integral part of it. So if indeed, you're called upon to do many kinds of things, other than shuffle paper, then it has to be impacting some where. (4A8)

12. Student interest:

> Just seeing responses on the faces of children as you walk through a building as they are working on--whether it is a selection of a new textbook for example. If they enjoy the stories would be an indirect kind of response. (4A8)

13. Community involvement:

> Subjective kinds of ways would be a community response, community input into the program. (4A)

Most rewards or sources of satisfaction identified by the participants are highly subjective. As one participant observed, central office instructional supervisors do not achieve their sense of accomplishment from any single measure or any single person. Much of the sense of accomplishment is internal in origin:

> You have to get your satisfaction either from just personal satisfaction that comes from doing the job well, even though knowing that you have done the best of your ability, or else you'd have to get your satisfaction somewhere else. (2B3Ø)

Authority Ambiguity

Authority ambiguity refers to the ambiguity surrounding two aspects of the role of central office instructional supervisors: (a) regarding their Functions is it to provide continuity for and maintain the school system's program or is it to act as a change agent by pressing for modification in the system's program? and (b) regarding their Relationships with their subordinates and peers (1) should they be characterized by line or by staff authority? (being directive or collaborative); and (2) who are their primary clients, the organization (the managerial aspect) or the teachers (the technical aspect)?

Ambiguity Surrounding Function

Although central office instructional supervisors are usually the ones who are expected to coordinate and to initiate local change improvement efforts in response to local, state, or national mandates, they also provide a stabilizing influence, preserving continuity as other more visible educators in the system, such as superintendents, principals, and teachers move in and out of the system.

Purpose and goals. The central office instructional supervisors who participated in this study agreed on their primary goal:

> What it means to me is an opportunity to impact vicariously, if not directly, on the instruction for a large numbers of children. (4A2)

The specific purpose of their position is viewed as providing an overall view of the entire system's instructional program and serving as a link between the organization's goals and classroom instruction by teachers. Central office instructional supervisors report being able to see the whole picture and how the parts fit together:

> One of the really big things I think about my particular position in that you are really global overviewing . . . of all of the different things that go on within a school system, which is really good. You can see all of the little parts and how they fit. Many of the things that we are trying to get done are not new things, just an overlapping of things that you have done. You can see how all of this fits within the total picture of everything. (3A7)

> So then going back to the roles that the supervisor has then as far as the helping relationship - the instructional leadership angle, of course, is important. Because if somebody who has this overall view can see needs that come not only from state directives and local mandates but of course national trends. You can see things that need to be done. The instructional leadership is important. (1A12)

Continuity. Because they are in a position to see the overall program, central office instructional supervisors report being responsible for preserving the continuity of the instructional program of their local system and for coordinating local changes in that program. All four participants remarked on their efforts to ensure the continuity of the instructional program despite changes in superintendents and/or teachers:

> More than half of the superintendents . . . are elected and they come and go every four years, and it's that instructional person that has stayed on. Maybe they didn't vote right if it were an elected position. They were still there though because they were accepted in the community and they had to earn then their

> credibility with a new superintendent, but they have stayed over time. I made that point to the state board that I perceive the instructional people as being the ones who held the instructional program together because superintendents come and go. (4A35)

> And I've been here a long time and . . . [our Superintendent] hasn't and that's a little bit different. (1A59)

In some ways, the curriculum directors reported acting to induct new superintendents into the subtleties of the local system's instructional classroom.

> But what is very interesting about the position is one that usually lasts over several administrations. Then you need somebody there. Now I've always realized that it was my responsibility to see the whole spectrum and that's the hardest thing to do. A good superintendent will do it after he or she learns what to do. The curriculum directors that I know . . . usually do stay until they retire. They help the superintendent get started. If one is elected and he comes in and he doesn't know the ropes, who's going to teach him? (2B11)

One participant had just had a new superintendent begin his term of office. The central office instructional supervisor asked if she might attend an out-of-town conference she had previously scheduled even though it was during his first few days in the office. The new superintendent said:

> "Now I need somebody here in the central office when I come in that knows about where things are and somebody I might ask questions of; so I don't want you and Mr. _____ gone at the same time." (2A49)

If indeed central office instructional supervisors do serve a vital function in preserving the continuity of the instructional program, their participation in inducting new superintendents into the system is one way of stabilizing the system during a change in leadership.

Another participant reported a specific technique by which she sought to preserve the continuity of the instructional program and change it through developing teams of teachers within each school building who can internalize the changes and then ensure that these changes become part of the continuing instructional program of that system:

> I think it is important to internalize whatever it is you are doing, so that it stays within the system rather than someone really just dictating and getting things done and then if that person is relieved it more or less dies . . . . If you have worked with teams of people and you have trained them and kept them being aware of the processes that are used, that if it is a good process, it is going to stay within the system rather than constantly starting out on tangents that change every time the teachers change or curriculum directions change, and I think that is really important, as much as making the changes. I think they need to be lasting types of things that everyone feels comfortable with and if they are beneficial, that they can be tested within the classroom and within the school . . . . If the changes are not beneficial, then they should be thrown out. (3A2,3)

Change. Even as outstanding central office instructional supervisors report seeing themselves as helping preserve the continuity of their local system's instructional program, they also report being responsible for the introduction and coordination of change in that program. One participant saw her role as being "a way to make changes within education." (3A3) She saw her recognition as an outstanding central office supervisor as acknowledgment of that fact:

> I associate the award with someone that makes positive changes within education. It's done by motivating other people to get things done. It is not just maintaining an existence, but it is moving ahead, constantly building and adding outstanding practices. (3A4Ø)

Ambiguity Surrounding Relationships

Another source of Authority Ambiguity regarding the role of central office instructional supervisors, as perceived by the four outstanding central office instructional supervisors who participated in this study, concerns the relationship that they maintain with their various constituencies - teachers, principals, superintendents, the state department of education, and parents. This facet of their role is ambiguous on two levels: (a) in regard to the many levels of constituencies they have or who they focus on (Focus of Interactions), and (b) in regard to the variety of modes of responding to those various constituencies (Nature of Interactions).

Serving in a mid-level position in the hierarchy of the organization, central office instructional supervisors perform a linking function, linking each building level team of educators with the system's goals as an organization. This means they must respond appropriately to teachers and principals at the building level and to the superintendent, the state department of education, and parents in the community. That is, their relationships must focus on each of these levels and their varying expectations. As central office instructional supervisors have many levels on which their relationships must focus, the mode of response or the nature of the response to them must vary as well. In short, central office instructional supervisors must change or vary their focus from level to level and must change or vary their manner of responding between, at, and within levels. At

times each of the constituencies require a concentrated focus. Similarly, each constituency requires shifts in responding collaborately and/or authoritatively. Most relationships are usually maintained through a collaborative approach. However, all participants indicated the need to be comfortable with responding very directly or authoritatively because certain situations require that.

Focus of interaction. As they serve to coordinate and to link efforts of educators at various levels of the school, central office instructional supervisors report a variety of techniques and responses in working with (a) teachers, (b) principals, (c) superintendents, and (d) the State Department of Education. Having a variety of ways of responding appro priately requires flexibility on behalf of the supervisor. This lack of rigidity facilitates coping with relationships that vary in regard to which personnel are the focus of the interaction.

A. Working with teachers.

In working with teachers the supervisors expressed awareness of; (a) the need to involve teachers in planning and decision-making; (b) the pressures teachers were subject to; (c) the sensitivity of teachers to the boundary limits of the supervisor's authority; (d) the delicate manner in which insecure teachers must be approached; (e) the existence of a wide variety of ways to motivate teachers, all of which indicated to teachers that they were valued as professionals; and (f) the fact that teachers at different grade levels

responded differently to the supervisor's assistance. The instructional supervisors who participated in this study recognized the critical necessity of having teachers committed to developing curriculum and to implementing improvements in the instructional program of the system:

> I mean, I find that many times I can mention it to the principal - and they will be supportive and so forth, but getting in and working with the teacher can really get a lot of things done especially in the area of curriculum development or getting something implemented within a classroom after the teacher closes the door and can do pretty much what they want to do. (3A1)

> That umbrella approach is very important and also the undergirding. As an example, I almost have to shift mind sets when I go from school to the other and yet we have the same basic curriculum in place. Because the needs as perceived by the teachers will vary in being able to interpret what we can do here to satisfy this little group of opinions, and they have to be done. I mean there's no way you can work outside of what the teachers intend to happen. (4B35)

One participant in this study indicated her awareness of the need to inform classroom teachers of the reason why certain changes are presented as directives from school administrators at various levels:

> I have found teachers will respond if you tell them very honestly why it has to be done that way without trying to pass the buck off to the bad old whatever. If you say, "We must do this," and level with them why it must be done, they may not like it any better than they liked it on the front end, but they understand. And I think that's extremely important. (4A13)

One supervisor indicated being sensitive to preserving the boundaries of the authority of their principals:

> I remember so well, a life-long friend that I had been working with was in a meeting with me. I said, "We'll do this - so and so." She said, "But that's the principal's job." I said, "Oh yes, now, we're going to

> involve the principal; he'll have to give you the direction on this. But we're going to make these recommendations." I could see immediately, the teacher thought I was pre-empting, I was over-stepping the principal's job; and that was not right, so to speak. (1A13)

One supervisor observed that teachers who resist required changes are usually the least effective and least secure; thus the need to be certain to explain to them why the change is needed so as to minimize threat:

> There are things that have to be done that the teachers will not want to do. To me, those people that do not want to do the things that have to be done, in most cases, are those who are threatened. And do, in other words, your less secure teachers, which are, in most cases, your less effective teachers, though sometimes a person can be effective in the classroom with young folks and be afraid of adults, I realize that. But there are things that just have to be done. If you share why they have to be done it helps some. If you can give enough notice. (1A28)

All participants commented that the teachers at different grade levels - elementary, middle, high - vary in receptivity to supervisory efforts to improve instructions. Differences are generally ascribed to the degree of focus on students themselves or to subject matter content. Thus, as teachers focus more on the subject areas, they become less receptive to the supervisor's assistance unless her academic background and teaching experience are in their content area. Elementary teachers were seen as most receptive to the supervisor's help; middle school teachers are somewhat less receptive; high school teachers are the least receptive.

> My best results have been with elementary teachers. (1A39)

> As you come down to junior high, you get an ambivalence there. They are a little bit easier to work with, but they are still more subject oriented than they are student oriented. (2A32)

> The K4 teachers are best, and then the middle would be next, and then high school teacher would be the worst. I think that it is content oriented and maybe because the level of the students you may have to probably develop defense mechanisms for. They are strong. Our teachers are so strong; and I really respect them, but they are. They will put up the most fuss. I think they are like specialists within their area. They feel like they know what they are doing, and they just want to do it. If I were a high school teacher, I might have more credibility. (3A13,14)

B. Working with principals.

As supervisors in the study discussed working with principals they acknowledged how critical the principal's support for the supervisors' efforts to improve instruction and curriculum is; therefore, supervisors seek to work collaboratively with principals. Despite the fact that they lack experience as principals, the supervisors expressed sensitivity to the demands on the principals' time and energy that restricted their involvement in instructional or curricular improvement efforts by the supervisor. Participants acknowledged the frustrations they often experience as they work with and through principals. Working with and through principals was reported to be most effective for ensuring that instructional improvements are actually implemented:

> 'Cause the teacher will listen to the principals more than they will listen to the curriculum Director. (1A62)

> But the same thing is true, if I have ever come up with an idea and the principal and I tried to get the teachers to do it, and the principal was really not for it, it was never done well. So it always I had to sell it to the principal or we had to develop it. In the past, we've really kind of shared together. (1A13)

Participants in the study identified working collaboratively with principals as the most effective:

> I ask the principals to select certain individuals many times and then I will train those individuals and I will ask those same people to serve, something relevant to the training that they have had previously. (3A1)

One participant was sensitive to the great demands on the principals' time and energy that would restrict the time the principal could devote to instructional improvement.

> I can understand where the principal is coming from. They have to keep up with all of those records and do all of those things and there really is no time to do them all. I guess one of the things that really bothers me in education that many, many times, the building level principal gets so busy with the paperwork and all of the requirements and everything that goes on at the building level, they are not really able to become involved in instruction in the follow through of the implementation of programs. I think that something needs to be done to help principals to do that. (3A8,9)

Another supervisor in the study recognized her credibility was questioned among principals because she had not served as one full time.

> Because principals seem to think that that is a unique job role that you have to have been in before you can know all of things that come up day after day, and so perhaps it's a weakness that I have not actually held that job title. (4A25)

Also, regarding maintaining good working relationships with principals, one supervisor noted:

> So I have found that you have got to know your principals real well before you can get on a good working relationship with them. (2A72)

Another supervisor acknowledged her relationship with one principal "has gotten to the point where it was almost a power struggle." (2A74) She admitted:

> I get real frustrated with a situation like this. This is the one who is a real autocrat. Great personality, real good. But, you know, it has got to be straight right down the line and he didn't like --- some things that he really didn't know how he was going to handle. so I don't know what he thought I was going to do. And that gets real frustrating. My big frustrations have come in the fact that I am both line and staff. I have a few principals that every once in a while will not like my thinking, and they have got to find out whether that came from a direct order from the superintendent or if that was my staff relations. (2A70,71)

C. Working with superintendents.

Participants' remarks indicated that they feel they serve a vital function during transitions involving new superintendents by assisting them in their induction to the position in that local system. Supervisors also reported that they must change as superintendents change and that the support of the superintendent is critical in implementing changes and is a significant source of satisfaction in a supervisory role.

In relationships with superintendents as their superordinates, supervisors must respond to changing expectations when a new superintendent takes office. For example one supervisor observed:

> Setting up an inservice program was one of the first things that we did with the new superintendent. The other superintendent really would not have supported me in that. But the other superintendent really didn't like in-service activities, which is kind of interesting. (1A11)

One supervisor commented that support from the superintendent was a major source of her satisfaction with her role:

> I think another reason I am so positive about my role is that we have a superintendent and a board of education who have been very supportive in terms of buying support material, and we have made so many textbook adoptions for 3 years in a row. When teachers see things happening like that - as when I came into the system, the science program had not changed since 1976, science textbooks! Last year we went through a process of adoption, and they all had new books, you know, system wide. Before that, it was math. The year before that it was social studies, and it is a good feeling. (3A18)

D. Working with the State Department of Education.

Regarding relationships with their supervisors in the state and with the state department, one supervisor reported a mixture of satisfied cooperation and of frustration due to changes in state mandated alterations in curriculum:

> That's one of the things that has been true the whole times I've been in the Supervision world - is the cooperation that has come from the other supervisors in the state, locally, in the area systems around here, and then over the state, State Department too. We've had fine help, as far as the supervisor's needs have been. That's why I thought it was interesting when somebody came up with one time with, the State Department wants to do it enough ____, and the supervisors ____. I thought, well, I don't know what else they could do, they wanted some coordination in some of the, maybe some of the political something. I thought, they surely have helped us every time I have called anybody anywhere to help as far as consultive services or materials or anything like that. I've certainly had all the help we've needed. And it's, it's quite sufficient and supportive. (1A69)

> I think one of the frustrations, again, were things coming down from the state. First of all not to be funded completely is always frustrating. But to come down and to make a big hallaballo about, just like the Life Role Skills Development. We went through torment with that. We revised all of our permanent records because we were going to do all of these things. They said, "Well, we really didn't mean that you had to do that." Now about the quarter system, they said before, "This is what you are going to do." So that, to me, means we are required to do it. So we did it. Well, I

> know how the State Department was. They're just like we are. A group of people are telling them to do this and they are doing it and when the group of people decide that they don't have to do it anymore, we don't have to do it. So, that's a strange thing. (1A86)

Nature of interaction. The four outstanding central office supervisors involved in this study report approaching interactions in a supportive collaborative manner designed to create a team approach among teachers, supervisors, principals, and superintendents. In general, the supervisors report that developing a team approach ensures that the teachers and principals will "buy in" to the improvements made thus ensuring their continuation despite personnel changes. However, the supervisors involved also report having to be quite direct at times and having to be comfort able doing that.

A. Being collaborative.

Outstanding central office instructional supervisors indicated they perceived of their role as a supportive, helping one:

> I see myself as a support person for teachers. And I feel like that if they see me working with them, that they will be more apt to really get involved more. (3A30)

Other terms used by one supervisor involved in the study to describe the nature of their interaction were we and family.

> I've always acted as a supervisor with a "We" concept. It has always been "Us." (1A6)

> We have just a small system as you can tell from the information that we talked about earlier. So we have always have a kind of family relationship. (1A15)

Two of the supervisors indicated that they found that a team approach with their co-workers ensured cooperation and worked well:

> It really works well to take a leadership team approach I think; and this may be why it is my role as a team member of a leadership team, knowing too that I have to be accountable in terms of whether the job gets done.
>
> And I have to make sure that the teachers understand what is expected. I think it's working with people rather than working over them. I think it is having skills to work with an individual or large groups of people in a way that promotes a team approach to getting things done within the system. It seems like in the major portion of things that you attempt to accomplish, that you are able to do it by incorporating the skills of other people and working with them to get really big things done and with everyone feeling really good rather than just one person. (3A11)
>
> It took a lot of planning and leg work to lay the groundwork for getting things done, but once the foundation is set, it becomes like a major team effort in trying to get people to look at you as if you are working with them. It becomes like a major team effort in trying to get people not to look at you as if you were dictating things for them to do but that it is something that you are working with them to do. I am not sure that is the most effective way, but for me, I feel like it is part of me and I just do it. And I may - I have been accused of spoonfeeding teachers and people that I work with. (3A2)
>
> I would be very comfortable in self-initiating any visit. Unfortunately, the day is far too short for me to do that as much as I would like to. But I have standing invitations. You know, come any time and stay the day with us. So I feel very comfortable in that. Now that didn't occur early on. I think you have to build that a little bit and part of that comes through building the fact that, "Hey, we are part of a team." And teachers have to grow to accept that part in a supervisor because otherwise it may be that "That's part of that central office that comes in only when they are looking for something" kind of thing. So over time, that comraderie has to be build as part of a team. We are all together in this. (4A9)

An aspect of a shared, team approach to instructional leadership and improvement was explained by one supervisor:

> But I'm thinking another thing about leadership - is that a good leader does share decisions and responsibilities as a Curriculum Director. It's not a threat to me to have a principal set up the In-Service for their school. (1A58)

Supervisors see buy-into decisions by teachers and principals as an outcome of shared decision making and team leadership in instructional improvements:

> I also feel very strongly that a good supervisor, instructional leader, (whatever this position may be called, and there are a myriad of titles as you found out,) that the involvement of teachers as often as possible, even if it's just "we are working on this, look it over and see what you think," kind of deal. It's very, very important; that buy-in has to be there. And instructional supervisors who fail to recognize the need for the buy-in on the part of teachers, will find it not being implemented, because once the door closes, the classroom teacher is the curriculum director. So that buy-in has to be there. And, of course, you are not going to get 100% buy-in on the part of any group of teachers in any given thing, but the more people that are involved in it, the more buy-in you get, whatever the project is -- if it's curriculum development, or if it's an implementation process,or if it's a selection of a major resource. (4A15)

> It is very, very difficult in such a position if you are leading a curriculum development in a given discipline and you have strong feelings on the part of strong teachers of the philosophies or certain goals and objectives so that even to the scoping and sequencing will become a very heated battle with teachers who are very strong. And working through that takes a great deal of patience. It takes a great deal, and there again, listening to a great deal and knowing when to step in and mediate to bring a compromise that will make, really, for a better instructional plan. Because if you have really strong feelings, and I have also found that there are some strong people on those committees, it is better to have them with you initially than to have them excluded and say, "But why didn't you do thus and such?" Even if we have to compromise and even if the going is rocky on the front end, it's better than to come out after a years study or a years process, even two years, to say, "Okay, this isn't exactly the way I wanted it," (or a teacher would say that,) "but we have brought together a really good plan." (4A14,15)

The same supervisor observed the necessity for listening skills on behalf of the supervisor to ensure members of the team that they have been heard.

> It's more or less letting them have your way. Letting them have your way, and that can be done if it isn't a walk in and demanding kind of situation. It takes a good bit of conversation. It takes an awful lot of listening. (On your behalf?) On my behalf. It takes an awful lot of listening. Probably more listening than talking. Through the listening, we can come back and do planning, constructive planning with teachers, other people in my role of different levels of superiors or my peers, whatever, by obtaining instruction. But that listening to the classroom teacher is awfully important. (4A4)

Another participant noted that not having content area specialists in her small system might well heighten buy-in and implementation of improvements:

> I am sure the coordinator would involve the teachers, but the coordinator would be there to take on all of that responsibility and everything. I think the teachers feel a certain sense of responsibility for getting the things done and making sure that they are working, which I think is sort of good because it promotes the leadership training in a lot of people. That is involving a lot of leadership people, and we have a lot of strong teachers in our school, I think, because of that interaction. Because in training these people I pulled resources from the State Department, universities, etc., and they have access to a lot of highly skilled people. It works out real well. (3A11)

B. Being directive.

Although all participants in this study indicated that a collaborative team approach provided better decisions and ensured their implementation and more satisfaction among teachers, they also reported that they had to, at times, resort to being very direct and authoritative.

> I recognize it in Supervision 101, we talk about is it administrative or is it a supportive role. I think it crosses the line, and it has to cross the line. (4A2)

> If I am a dictator, I not going to be able to get very much done, except to be very efficient. So, I may have mixed feelings about that! As I've said before, there are some things that have to be done. And as director, you can have them done. But the world goes much better when I can involve people and I can help people. And then they can help me do things. That's the way we've always done. (1A14)

> So I firmly believe that there have to be times when you say, "But, we must do it this way; these are the constraints," and then give the reasons therefore. But in other roles, then it is not on the organization or, pairing in my mind, line, it is staff for the most part. (4A2)

> The situation where you run into the quandry on that is that sometimes there are things that have to be done and there's no way say it but, "It will be done and you have to do it." And that's the unpleasant part of supervision. I think sometimes if you can share, not sometimes, but if you can always share why this has to be done, sometimes it's a little easier to take on the other person's part. (1A7)

Comfort with the authoritative, direct approach is indicated in one supervisors' statement:

> And I have always taken authority well. It never has bothered me to have someone above me. And I have never really minded having someone below me. I've seen that, too, as a problem some have sometimes in relation to having to tell somebody something. Some people don't do that too well. They're too bossy. When they're bossy, I think they are sometimes, uh, cruel in the way that they work with people. So, I've never really minded that. (1A58)

Yet the same supervisor acknowledged difficulty in directing his teachers to stop scheduling high school classes on a quarter system:

> You know, you think between the department chairperson, the expert in the school, hopefully, and his fellow teachers and the principal and me, the 23 of us would be able to come up with some good ideas. If I just said, "You will not do that anymore" . . . You know, that was, perhaps what I should have done. So I may have done them an injustice. But they . . . well, I was going to say they wouldn't do it . . . maybe if I had made them. But, yet, I'm sorry, I can't do that. That's just part of my personality, I guess. (1A52)

DISCUSSION OF THEORETICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Flexibility

Flexibility, as an integrating concept in a preliminary theory regarding outstanding central office instructional supervisors derived from this study, refers to the capacity of the supervisor as a person to respond adaptively, purposefully, and effectively to a multitude of dimensions of the professional environment. As one participant in the present study stated, "If you ain't flexible, you can't make it" (1B). The need for flexibility among supervisors arises in response to three characteristics of the role of central office supervisors. These three characteristics are identified as the integrating concepts of fragmented focus, paradoxical visibility, and authority ambiguity.

Harvey (1966a, 1966b) defines flexibility as the capacity or attribute of a person that allows her or him to assimilate diversity and deviant events, to move toward a number of goals or values simultaneously, and to generate alternative responses. The essence of this flexibility is perhaps best conveyed through metaphor. The most appropriate metaphor for this aspect of outstanding central office supervision is that of a gyroscope. This is so because the gyroscope is characterized, as were the participants' descriptions of their role, by dynamic stability. Further discussion of the appropriateness of this metaphor will be developed in a forthcoming article.

The instrumental nature of flexibility and adaptability on behalf of effective leaders is identified by Hollander (1975) as being able to handle "changing requirements as new situations develop" (p. 231). Thompson (1967) suggests that leaders are occasionally selected for their capacity to deal with various organizational contingencies. Weick (1978) suggests an effective leader is one who is perceived as demonstrating a capacity for "requisite variety" or the ability to respond to the loosely coupled worlds, the uncertain technologies, the unstable environment, and the ambiguous, multiple, and conflicting goals that characterize the educational enterprise. Pfeffer (1978) similarly maintains that an effective leader is a "good medium" in that he or she is flexible and adaptable and derives power from her or his ability to deal with uncertainties. Indeed, an implicit assumption of most contingency theories of leadership is that leaders possess or should possess the ability to adapt to certain dimensions of their environments and that their effectiveness as leaders is dependent upon their ability to respond appropriately and with flexibility to those contingencies (Blake & Morton, 1964; Cartwright & Zander, 1960; Fiedler, 1967; Halpin & Winer, 1980; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977; Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Scheneck, & Pennings, 1971; Reddin, 1970; Sergiovanni & Elliott, 1975; Vroom, 1975, Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

In discussing the functional nature of ambiguity, Eisenberg (1984) states that ambiguity is necessary to deal with the paradox of promoting cohesion and coordination and simultaneously providing for the flexibility, creativity, and adaptability [emphasis added] necessary for responding to environmental changes that result from appropriate individual freedom. Indeed, the often lamented ambiguity regarding the role of central office instructional supervisors may be viewed not as deviational but as functional, especially in view of the idiosyncratic nature of expectations regarding this role (Costa & Guditus, 1984).

In instructional supervision, Harris (1972) identified flexibility as a functional criterion for the efficiency of instructional supervisors in terms of their use of time and energy. Data regarding fragmented focus in the current study confirm the validity of Harris' criterion. Glickman, (1981, 1985) assumes a capacity for flexibility among instructional supervisors which enables them to appropriately and effectively implement the various approaches of his Developmental Supervision Theory. Glickman suggests that teachers who are high in quality of abstract thinking can function with a greater degree of flexibility and are able to tolerate more ambiguity. It is logical to assume that this would also be true of the supervisors themselves.

A number of research studies in supervision and educational administration report findings that are related to flexibility on behalf of instructional supervisors. Seiber

(1981) reports that novelty, new experiences, and the ability to satisfy professional curiosity were among the incentives for utilizing knowledge identified in his study of knowledge utilization (KU) or the implementation of research findings and innovative educational programs in the educational arena. Foster (1964) found that flexibility, defined as "tolerance for tentativeness" or the absence of rigidity, was one of three characteristics of principals who "made a difference" in a study conducted at Ohio State University.

Two studies which deal with the cognition of supervisors are of interest here. Mikkelsen and Joyner (1983) in their study of the cognition of instructional supervisors found that open-minded supervisors preferred the "organizing for instruction" aspect of their role while close-minded supervisors preferred the "public relations" aspect of their role. Besculides (1980) reports finding a significant relationship between the positions of educational administrators and supervisors and her or his level of integrative complexity. In his study, Besculides defined integrative complexity as a measure of the number of different alternatives generated by a person from a given set of stimuli and as measured on an instrument which he developed for the study. Besculides suggests that the degree of one's integrative complexity is more an outgrowth of how one has learned and the level of complexity of one's environment rather than any innate ability. Indeed, the question exists whether people with a high degree of cognitive complexity seek out complex environments or develop that cognitive complexity in response to a

complex environment. That the position or role one is in can influence one's personality in regard to cognitive complexity was suggested by Tannenbaum (1957) as an effort to adjust one's cognitive structure to be compatible with one's environment or role.

If this is true, perhaps the flexibility required by outstanding central office instructional supervisors may well be a learned response rather than an innate capacity that enhances their performance of their role. As will be further discussed below, many theorists in cognitive systems suggest that one's cognitive complexity can indeed be developed by specific training in cognitive and metacognitive skills. This should have enormous impact on the training of instructional supervisors, if, indeed, flexibility is confirmed as characteristic of outstanding, effective, exemplary, or successful instructional supervisors.

Donmoyer and Neff (1983) found in their study of three curriculum directors that the participants had a "high degree of flexibility over their activities and could control the consistency, duration, and coherence of their work and thus control its variety, brevity, and fragmentation" (p. 45). Other studies (Donmoyer & Neff, 1983; Pitner, 1978; Sullivan, 1980) which are based on Mintzberg's theory of the work behavior of managers report the variety, brevity, and fragmentation of the work flow as being somewhat deviational and requiring remediation. The present study suggests that these characteristics of the role of central office

instructional supervisors may well be functional and that they are appropriately responded to by a correspondingly higher degree of conceptual complexity on behalf of the role occupant.

Blumberg's (1984) report to the A.S.C.D. Committee on Central Office Supervisors identifies a number of sources of satisfaction that central office supervisors associate with their role. Those listed indicate that the complexity and diversity of the role are incentives: (a) potential to try new things; (b) job flexibility and the ability to develop one's own schedule; (c) challenge to be creative; and (d) diversity of one's work. That these are viewed as positive aspects of the role suggests that the role occupants may have levels of conceptual complexity that are compatible with these aspects of the role. Tripodi and Bieri (1966) report a study which suggests that cognitively complex individuals tend to seek out complex and contradictory information and situations that are more similar to the complexity of their own cognitive structure. Sarbin (1954) reports that the influence of one's cognitive structure upon the validity of her or his role perceptions and her or his skills in role enactment is one of three factors that influence variations in role enactment.

Cognitive Complexity

The integrating concept in the preliminary theory presented here and several other studies suggests that cognitive complexity is an important aspect of outstanding

central office instructional supervisors. Therefore, a clarification of some definitions, theory, and research results regarding cognitive complexity are discussed below.

Conceptual systems theory is a phenomenological theoretical approach to the study of personality. This approach focuses on one's conscious experiences, specifically the way one processes information. According to Schroder, Driver, and Streufert (1961), information can be classified in essentially two ways: (a) according to content variables regarding what and how much is learned; or (b) structural variables regarding how a person combines stimuli that he or she receives and how he or she internally interprets those stimuli and generates information, that is, how he or she processes information. According to Joyce and Weil (1980), conceptual systems theory focuses on the structures (programs or sets of rules) by which an individual relates to her or his environment. Conceptual systems theory describes human development in terms of increasingly complex systems for processing information about people, things, and events. According to this theory, growth is related to environmental conditions and one's previous level of conceptual and personality developmental stage. Integrative complexity of the conceptual structure is a measure of the number of dimensions of an environment or of a situation and the degree to which those dimensions are interrelated in one's cognition (Hunt, 1970).

Cognitive complexity is a term that relates to the degree of complexity and multidimensionality of one's cog-

nitive structure. Researchers and theorists use two different terms to describe this variable: (a) cognitive complexity (Bieri, 1966; Harvey, 1966a, 1966b; Higgins, 1958; Knefelham, Parker, & Widick, 1978) and (b) conceptual complexity (Hunt, 1970; Schroder, 1971). Related concepts regarding complexity of stages or levels of one's cognitive system are identified by Harvey (1966) as System 4 Functioning and Loevinger (1970) as Autonomous (A5) and Integrative (I6) stages of ego development. Other theories related to cognition which relate to flexibility, adaptability, tolerance for ambiguity, reconciliation of opposites or contradictions, and complexity are presented by Kopolowitz (1978) as Unitary Operational Thought, by Torrance and Hall (1980) as Creativity, by Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, and Snoek (1964) as Flexibility, and by Perry (1970) as Multiplicity. These theories describe characteristics of cognitive systems that may be summarized as follows: (a) adaptability, (b) flexibility, (c) ability to generate alternative means to a valued end to assimilate diversity and contradictory events without loss or abandonment of goal; (d) tolerance for ambiguity; (e) openness; and (f) ability to integrate apparent contradictions.

The data that delineate the theme of Flexibility in the present study are perhaps most closely related to the characteristics identified by Kahn, et al. (1964) as being characteristic of a flexible person: (a) facile at integrating new knowledge into one's cognitive system; (b)

open to influence but not control; (c) preference for a job involving variability and the opportunity to explore new ideas; (d) strong team orientation; prefers collaborative relationships; and (e) not overly concerned with being consistent, more apt to disapprove of hasty decisions which fail to consider the full range of potential consequences.

The characteristics of individuals who possess a high degree of conceptual complexity are sufficiently similar to those required of outstanding central office instructional supervisors as they respond appropriately, purposefully, and effectively to the three integrating concepts of the proposed theory in the present study--fragmented focus, paradoxical visibility, and authority ambiguity--to hypothesize that the participants are characterized by a high degree of flexibility or cognitive complexity.

Implications of this hypothesis, if confirmed by future research, provide guidance for improvements in selection, training, and effectiveness of central office instructional supervisors as well as satisfaction of central office instructional supervisors. Charters (1963) states that individuals with more complex and sophisticated cognitive systems should demonstrate more power in coping with the institutional world. Wagner and Sternberg (1984) state that the information processing approach to instruction is promising. They propose that because it is possible to uncover the underlying processes and skills in cognitive organization that individuals can be trained in cognitive reorganization

and that cognitive and metacognitive (thinking about one's thinking) training can develop and enhance one's flexibility. Thus, it seems appropriate to suggest that such training should be included in the preparation and/or professional development of central office instructional supervisors if further research confirms the validity of the hypothesis generated from the current research study.

In view of the plethora of new programs in training in thinking skills for students, their usefulness for supervisors, whose professional and social world interactions are far more complex, would seem only logical. If, as Penick, Yager, and Bonseitter (1986) observe, "Flexibility counts above all...; students who have flexible teachers become flexible themselves" (p. 19), it follows that teachers who have flexible supervisors should become more flexible, a skill that our rapidly changing and even more complex world increasing by demands of those who are to succeed.

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